

Global News Roundup

One in 6 children live in relative poverty

One in 6 children live below the national poverty line in their country, according to a new report from UNICEF. Rates of child poverty in the United States are higher now than they were in the 1970s, despite attempts at reforming the system of benefits for low-income families.

US might introduce abortion pill

The US Food and Drug Administration is considering approving the use of mifepristone (RU 486) to induce abortions, but only if used under strict conditions. Prescribing privileges may be restricted to doctors trained to perform surgical abortions, and clinics providing the service may have to be situated within 1 hour of an emergency room.

Chinese herbs may cause cancer

Doctors in Belgium have discovered that a Chinese herb, *Aristolochia fangchi*, already linked to renal failure, may cause cancer of the urinary system. The US Food and Drug Administration has sent a letter to US physicians with a list of herbal remedies thought to contain the hazardous herb.

New female condom to undergo trials

Scientists in Canada will undertake phase I trials of a new “invisible condom” for women. The condom is a gel, introduced into a woman’s vagina, that acts first as a physical barrier to sexually transmitted pathogens and then kills them. It can also be used as a contraceptive when it includes spermicide. It is transparent, colorless, and odorless.

Medicare to cover patients in clinical trials

President Clinton has told the US Department of Health and Human Services to authorize payment for services covered by Medicare for patients in clinical trials. The directive, which does not require congressional approval, follows last December’s Institute of Medicine report, which said: “Medicare should pay for routine care of beneficiaries enrolled in clinical trials in the same way it pays for this care outside of clinical trials.”